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ABSTRACT

Intended for high school English teachers, this document is devoted to the teaching of English and the effect of change on communication and language usage. Contents include the following: "The Search for What Matters," which discusses what was emphasized in the past in English instruction and examines the responsibilities of today; "Sensing the Future in the Instant," which considers the misuse of language in communication asks what effect this has on teachers of English; "A Brief Introduction to the ERIC System," which explains how to use Educational Resources Information Center collections; and "A Spelling Quiz," which presents examples of relatively common words which have more than one correct spelling given in leading dictionaries.

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Change and the Teacher

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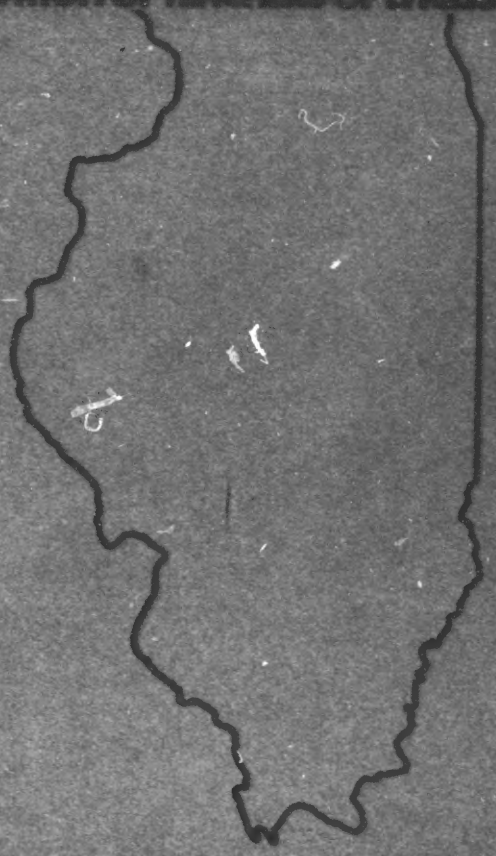

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The Search for What Matters

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I hope to spend a few minutes in talking with you about the tasks that have seemed important to English teachers in the past and then to spend a few minutes more in discussing the tasks and responsibilities of English teachers today.

As a school subject, English is not really very old, and perhaps as a consequence of its youth we teachers have made many mistakes in what we have done with it. We are indeed still searching for what is most important to do. Shakespeare did not study English in school; he studied Latin and "lesse Greeke," as Ben Jonson said superciliously. Two centuries later the young Alexander Pope also studied Latin and Greek, not English. The same thing was true of people in the romantic age a century after Pope. On this side of the water, eighteenth and nineteenth century schoolboys (there were not yet many schoolgirls above the age of fourteen) also usually spent their time on Latin, Greek, and mathematics. When Harvard opened its doors in the seventeenth century, it insisted that entering students be able to "translate any classical author into English and readily make and speak true Latin, and write it in verse as well as prose; and perfectly decline the paradigms of nouns and verbs in the Greek tongue." On the Harvard campus in the early days students had to speak only Latin; the use of English was prohibited on college property. Teachers in lower schools obviously would try to equip students to read, write, and speak the languages — especially Latin — that the colleges insisted were valuable.

Most of our readers know J. N. Hook as a distinguished leader in English education in Illinois and the nation. This paper was presented as the banquet speech at the IATE convention, November 1973.

There were some early signs of rebellion, though. For instance, the Philadelphia Academy, founded in 1749 by Benjamin Franklin, had one curriculum that stressed English, as well as more traditional ones emphasizing Latin and mathematics. In the early nineteenth century some of the academies offered work in English pronunciation, rhetoric, declamation, extemporaneous speaking, grammar, biography, and composition. No teachers, though, were specifically prepared for such instruction. Not until the beginning of our own century were there specialized teachers of something called "high school English," and there was much complaining on the part of the public, administrators, and teachers themselves when specialization in English became frequent.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, high schools had begun to develop — though very slowly. At the end of the century their growth became rapid; the number of high school students approximately quadrupled between 1890 and 1910. These schools were less classically oriented than were the academies, but they were still limited by college entrance requirements. Whether or not a student intended to go to college, he had to take the same courses. This situation did not change very quickly, especially in small schools. When I was a high school student in the late 1920s, all of us had to take Latin, algebra, geometry, botany, zoology, physics, English, history, and civics — regardless of whether all those subjects were related to our interests and ambitions. Some of my friends, I am sure — friends who did not or should not want to go to college — would have profited much more from such things as agriculture and home economics, and others would have found art and music more valuable than zoology and physics, but we all had to follow identical courses of study. My freshman class had fifty-one entering students. Sixteen of those dropped out during their freshman year, at least partly because they were completely baffled by Latin and algebra, and by the time the rest of us were seniors, only fifteen of us had survived from the original fifty-one.

Until the present century, the study of literature in English class meant only the study of the literature of England. Comparative literature was not even thought of, and American literature sneaked in to the high school curriculum by way of a few nineteenth century writers who had lasted the hundred years supposedly requisite for becoming classics: Hawthorne, Whittier, Poe, Longfellow, Lowell, and Irving slowly pushed the door ajar for their followers. The long ignoring of American literature in the high schools was caused in large part by the indifference and hostility of college English departments, almost all of whose professors were

Anglophiles and Americanophobes. I remember two of my own college professors — one a Shakespearean and one a Miltonist — who disagreed about almost everything else but who said with one accord, "Why should there be any professors of American literature? There *isn't* any American literature." And this was only some thirty years ago.

As far as the English language is concerned, only in recent years have teachers enlarged their focus. Starting in about the third or fourth grade and continuing through the later grades (high school and the freshman year of college), students used to go repetitiously over the same kinds of material year after year. One thing that they did was to analyze sentences. This used to be called "parsing." Parsing helped to make English respectable, because parsing was a constant in the study of Latin. If parsing was right for Latin, the reasoning went, it must be desirable for English. A class would take a Latin sentence and go through it word by word, indicating such things as the case, number, person, tense, voice, mood, and precise grammatical function of each word. This kind of instruction was carried over into English, but gradually was supplanted by diagraming or other somewhat less detailed methods of sentence analysis.

In addition to grammatical analysis, language study was concerned with "correctness." The parsing or other analysis was supposed to contribute in some vague way to the attainment of correctness. So a student for nine or ten consecutive years would analyze and analyze and analyze, but at the end of that time would perhaps still be saying "ain't" and "we was." Newspaper editorialists would editorialize about the ever-increasing illiteracies of high school graduates, and teachers would wonder why all this analysis was not bringing results, and would blame bad home environments or bad writing in newspapers, and would sometimes decide that the only solution would be to devote still more time to analysis — to the medicine that demonstrably was not doing any good. So students would diagram ten sentences where they had previously diagramed five. And they kept on saying "we was."

Teachers also tried all sorts of drill activities. The production of workbooks became a great national enterprise, and thousands of barrels of ink were used in underlining subjects, encircling predicates, and choosing between "if I was" and "if I were."

Even the study of literature was affected by the passion for analysis. Literature workbooks began to accompany the numerous series of literature textbooks, but before that, in many schools, literature study had meant sentence-by-sentence analysis and

assorted busywork. Writing in 1915, educational historian Ellwood P. Cubberley explained what had happened:

> There has been much criticism, during the past two decades, of the teaching of English literature in our schools and colleges. [Does that sound familiar?] The earlier teaching of English was characterized largely by a type of instruction which tried to inspire pupils through their contact with the classics of our language, and to awaken in them an enduring love of both poetry and prose. The work being in large part interpretation and somewhat inspirational in nature, calling for much from the teacher and less than in most other subjects from the pupils, teachers in other subjects more susceptible to drill tended to characterize the instruction as "snap work." Stung by the criticism, teachers of English went for a time to the other extreme, substituted a detailed analysis of a few masterpieces for the more extensive reading which had formerly been the practice, and in time reduced the instruction to a monotonous and almost lifeless type of intensive study. Historical and mythological allusions were to be looked up, collateral reading was prescribed, notebooks were to be compiled, and the work was made so heavy, and often so uninteresting, that no charge of "snap" could be brought against it.

As a concomitant of such instruction, many teachers substituted study of the history of literature for study of the literature itself, partly because historical study lent itself easily to examination questions about authors' dates and biographical events and about characteristics of literary periods, and thus seemed to bring to literature a kind of rigor and measurableness similar to what the sciences and mathematics had. In my own high school, we spent the junior year in studying Long's green-backed history of American literature and were expected to remember the biographical data and literary characteristics of some hundred or more American writers, whose works were typically sampled in only a paragraph or two. To this day I cannot tell you Walt Whitman's *dates*, but when I finished high school and had a chance to read much of his *poetry*, I came to love it dearly.

For many years teachers tended to encourage rhapsody and Fourth-of-July oratory in composition. Representative topics were "Christmas Memories," "Walking in Autumn Woods," "Patriotism," and "What Columbus Day Means to Me." Inspired partly by Hughes Mearns' books *Creative Youth* and *Creative Power*, some teachers turned to emphasis on creative writing. But some college teachers told them, "We'd rather get freshmen who can write a good, clear exposition or who are adept at literary analysis," so the high schools tried to prepare their students for such things.

I have not intentionally been hostile toward any of the teachers who for the past century or so have been following some of the goals and methods I have been describing. All of them, I am sure,

meant well. They did, it is true, follow educational fads; they did try to give the college teachers what they thought the college teachers thought they wanted. But their intentions were good. They had students parse sentences because they believed that parsing was a result-getting task. In literature they had students remember dates because for a while college entrance examinations often asked historical questions. Whatever they did, they did not because they were malicious or stupid but because they were dedicated teachers.

Our perspective of a hundred years suggests, though, that it is possible to find in our subject much that matters more than what has been emphasized in the past. We know that parsing and sentence-diagraming did not make students good writers or effective users of language. We know that literary history and literary criticism and memorization of minute details did not turn students into lovers of literature. And we wonder — or *I* wonder — whether we can afford to continue wasting time, money, and effort on trivia, on inconsequentials. The study of English, I believe, has more to offer the people of America than we have allowed it to offer. Particularly now, in a period that threatens our accustomed ways of life and indeed our existence itself, the study of language and composition and literature has a chance to contribute much to man's survival and well-being.

Let me be gloomy for a few moments and then let me be more optimistic.

The world's human population is rapidly approaching four billion, or about eighty persons per square mile of land surface. When I was a boy, it was only two billion — or about forty per square mile. Only ten years ago it was just 3.2 billion, or some sixty per square mile. The population of the United States has more than doubled in my lifetime; it has doubled in your lifetime if you are fifty years old.

Over the four billion people hangs a constant threat of annihilation. France continues to test nuclear bombs in the Pacific, spreading radioactive waste around the globe. The Strategic Arms Limitation Talks drone on and on year after year. Although there are occasional encouraging reports, they are counteracted by other reports of new and more powerful weapons and the stockpiling of still more weapons — even though Russia and the United States could each destroy the other a thousand times with the bombs it already has. How many times must a person be killed to be dead? China also has the bomb and is moving fast toward the capability of delivering it anywhere in the world. Fighting flares up in the

Middle East, and the opening fusillade endangers the whole world.

Within our own nation, it seems that crime can be combatted only by having almost as many policemen as there are criminals — and occasionally one of the policemen doubles as one of the criminals. Events of the past few months have demonstrated that crime can and does reach the very highest offices of the United States. A ruthless disregard for the wishes of the people and perhaps for the Constitution itself is sometimes apparent among national leaders. Giant corporations, selfishly intent only on rewarding their own major stockholders and officers, sell defective machines and unnutritious food. Giant labor unions say in effect "The public be damned" as it will they halt production, transportation, or any of the other services on which a nation necessarily depends. Our planners fail to be farsighted enough in their planning even to keep us warm in our homes. Selfishness and greed are motivating forces even among such supposedly altruistic professions as medicine and education. Lawlessness characterizes some of the nation's leading lawyers.

The catalog of abuses and crimes and sins and dangers could go on from here to tomorrow. But you can construct the catalog as well as I can. These are troublous times, as others have been, but these perhaps more than others because there are more people to suffer and greater-than-ever potential to cause suffering and death.

"All right," you say. "Why don't you tell us something new? Every evening Walter Cronkite's news stories illustrate what you're talking about. But what does all this have to do with me and my job? I'm an English teacher, and English has nothing to do with overpopulation and hunger and hydrogen bombs and crooked politicians and unscrupulous corporations and unions."

And I answer, "Everything has something to do with everything else. All things are related. Yesterday led to today which leads to tomorrow. Bad weather in Russia affects the price and the quantity and quality of bread and meat on American tables. The foot bone is connected to the shin bone. As the twig is bent the tree shall grow. If you educate the nation's young, you educate the nation and you shape tomorrow."

To help combat the kinds of ills I have been describing, we need English instruction that has more vision and more strength. Obviously even then English alone is not going to reform the world's people or even the people of America. But we English teachers can, I believe, do more to help than we have in the past to build the understanding and the moral strength and the clarity

of thought and communication that are necessary more than ever for human well-being.

What are some of the ways, the possible ways, to increase the strength of what we do? I can't think of them all, but you and I and our fellow-workers together can think of many of them and start trying them out. Maybe, in fact, what is most needed is a combination of many of the fine things occurring right now in somebody's classrooms somewhere — perhaps in yours.

With regard to the English language, let's help kids to attain a broader view. We have to stop building in them the stereotypic view of us that most former students have — the view that we as English teachers are primarily policemen of the language, policemen who will smear with red ink anybody who misbehaves linguistically. Language is not something to be endlessly analyzed and corrected. It is a positive force; it is the force that has led man to his vast accomplishments. Because dogs and elephants and monkeys and fish have no real language, they have no wheels, they build no houses and factories and stores and schools, they have no books and art and music; man would not have such things either if he had not developed his innate capacity for speech.

Students need to know the power of language to sway people for good or ill. Because Confucius and Plato and Aristotle could use language well, they have for centuries influenced the thinking and therefore the lives of billions of people in both the eastern and the western worlds. On the other hand, because Adolf Hitler could sway people with his emotional outpourings of language, there were millions of casualties in World World II; if Winston Churchill had not in a quite different way used his language with no less effectiveness, the outcome of that war might not have been the same.

It is no accident that every large corporation has a public relations department, for corporation leaders know how important it is to use language to influence people. It is no accident that every American president has his speech writers, adept at choosing the words best suited to accomplish whatever the president's immediate purpose may be.

On a smaller scale, it is hardly a secret that our lives at home, at school, and at work are constantly affected by the words we speak and hear and by the nonlinguistic (paralinguistic) signals we constantly send forth. Our children need to learn that the quality of their personal lives, the degree of their personal happiness, will inevitably be influenced daily by language. Many a faltering marriage could be saved if there were better communi-

cation. The generation gap is often mainly the result of the failure of parents and children to communicate. Fights in the street or quarrels in the factory sometimes begin simply because people talk differently and do not respect one another's right to talk differently.

To accomplish the kinds of awareness of language that I believe necessary, we teachers must do much more than teach grammatical analysis and usage. (I do not argue that these should be eliminated, but they must not be given the overriding importance that they are still given in many schools.) We need to pay much more attention to semantics, which I am inclined to define as the study of the ways that a person's language affects other people. Through the study of dialects we need to gain respect for speech different from ours, for speakers different from us. We need to see how language has been an essential part of every advance made by man from the time he first invented a noun-verb combination or its equivalent. We need to become aware of the history of our language and its relationship to other languages so that we can better understand how language works, and how it changes in response to historical events. Grammatical analysis, too, should be taught from the point of view of how the English sentence really works — not as a matter of mere labels. And "correctness" must be taught as something relative and transitory, not as something immutable and eternal. The language of gesture, the language of facial expression, the language of touch, the language of grunts and other wordless sounds, and the language of nonverbal symbols all need consideration somewhere in our courses. We should try to tell students the truths about language, not the half-truths or even untruths that have been foisted upon generations of students.

In composition we need to increase our attention to content, to organization, and to the importance of straight thinking. I have read hundreds of compositions that teachers have marked A or B only because the writers did not misspell or mispunctuate or violate conventions currently followed in the use of verbs and pronouns. For those teachers, apparently, good writing consists only of freedom from error. Actually, good writing is positive. It has something to say — ideally, something that brings the reader information or an emotional response not duplicated in his own experience. Or sometimes, to alter Alexander Pope's line slightly, it offers "What oft was thought, but seldom so well expressed." Good writing avoids flaws in logic. And as a rule it proceeds rather methodically from A through B through C to Destination (D).

As a whole, the composition program should offer students much variety, much freedom of choice, much freedom to experiment.

There should be room in it for the simple process theme explaining how to make fudge or how the telephone works, room for various kinds of literary responses (but not exclusively that), room for expounding opinions, room for discussion of contemporary events and issues, room sometimes for completely free expression of self, and room also for the imaginative — the story, the poem, the play, the fantasy, the stream-of-consciousness narrative, or whatever innovative mode happens to appeal to the idiosyncratic student. The composition program should encourage exactness of diction, but it should also encourage play with words, experimentation with effects, experimentation with sentence structure and organization and point of view. And it must not, of course, be supposed that every piece of a student's writing will be a success. Many pieces will not be. Even Hank Aaron does not hit a home run each time at bat.

The literary part of our program must not pay much attention to the date when Rip Van Winkle awoke, the place where Robert Frost was born, or the probable color of Annabel Lee's hair. Nor must it consist of incessant practice in explication de texte and other varieties of literary criticism; they may be given some attention, but they are not really what matters to a literary beginner. How many students now, after laboriously writing an explication of a to-them abstruse poem, turn happily to a comic book or turn away entirely from the medium of print? And literary study must not be just an endless symbol hunt; there have been at least a thousand explanations of the symbolism of Ahab's hunt for Moby Dick, each primarily a monument to somebody's ingenuity. Why ask a student to make the number greater?

I believe that literature's primary values are as wholesome amusement and as enlightenment concerning human beings. Kids should come to regard the reading of literature as good fun, not as a chore or a bore. We have been too deadly serious, many of us, in our approach to literature. We have made it distasteful to many students — and as a result far too many of them read almost no books or magazines after leaving our classrooms. Let us not be shamefaced about having fun with literature — responding freely to it, arguing about it, dramatizing it, illustrating it, singing it, even transmuting it to the form of a TV show.

But behind the fun remains the fact that voluminous reading, varied reading, can bring kids (and adults) endless enlightenment about people, about what has been called the human predicament, about what drives people, about their strengths and their limitations, about human potential. Is it too idealistic to ask "If you were

making a world, what would the people be like?" Knowing much about people can fire ambition, can build ideals but also can arouse anger at a present widespread lack of ideals, can develop a philosophy, can create sympathy and empathy and love, can discourage belief in simplistic solutions and in stereotypes, can help us all to realize that the phrase "the brotherhood of man" is not necessarily just empty sound but contains potential reality. With books we can explore the present in depth and go back centuries in time, we can sometimes get inside the skins of other people much better than we can even in our own families, we can grasp the sources of human conflict, and we can come to comprehend why all of us are the curious mixtures we are. "With all thy getting, get understanding," the psalmist tells us.

None of us can guarantee that anything studied in schools will prevent nuclear devastation, will eliminate or even reduce greed, will prevent deceit by people in high places, or will feed the hungry and warm the cold. But the world's chances will be a little better if more people understand other people, if more people learn to think straight, and if more people use language as the powerful but gentle tool that it can be. Maybe, as we English teachers continue the search for what matters in our instruction, those are some of the things we should keep in mind.

Sensing the Future in the Instant

EDMUND J. FARRELL
ASSOCIATE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

As many of you are aware, I owe credit for my title to Lady Macbeth, that impatient, gray, and brittle helpmate, who, unwilling to await the natural fulfillment of the process of time, decided to hasten the day when the prophecies of the weird sisters came true. Having been informed in a letter of the predictions of the witches and having been apprised by a messenger of the imminent arrival of

---

The following short address was delivered by Mr. Farrell at the NCTE convention in Minneapolis, months before the televised hearings on Watergate. Farrell's comments on the importance of teaching students to analyze language critically and to use it responsibly are developed at greater length in "Where's the Good Word?" *English Journal*, October, 1973.

King Duncan at Inverness, Lady Macbeth greets her husband in Act 1, Scene V:

> Great Glamis! Worthy Cawdor!
> Greater than both, by the all-hail hereafter!
> Thy letters have transported me beyond
> This ignorant present, and I feel now
> The future in the instant.

And in their attempts to gain control of time, to fuse the future into the instant — particularly through the murders of Duncan and Banquo and the attempted murder of Fleance — husband and wife go against nature and bring about their own damnation and destruction. One of the last speeches in the play is that in which Macduff, having beheaded Macbeth, announces, "The time is free," signifying that Scotland once again can be a healthy, verdant, well-regulated nation — a nation in tune with nature's clock.

Well, that time is not this time, nor their time our time. Natural order was nudged out of orbit by C. ernicus; the chronology of Genesis, and with it man's divinely-favored placement on earth, was unwound by Darwin; Gutenberg got the presses rolling; and Marconi launched over the airwaves what was to be a continuing invasion of sounds and sights. Technology now orders nature, including its seasons ('tis a Yuletide of artificial trees and artificial snow), and change occurs so rapidly that Macbeth's "Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow / Creeps in this petty pace from day to day / To the last syllable of recorded time" seems less an expression of tragic ennui than a consummation devoutly to be wished.

In a time of rapid change, it becomes imperative that the future be anticipated and carefully planned for. One cannot always permit events to run their natural course. Consequently, what portends particular ill for this nation's tomorrows is not the attempts of citizens to order the future but rather their inability to do so, even when they share Lady Macbeth's capacity to intuit from the events of the day what possibilities lie ahead.

As I worried about what I would say this morning, a number of random ideas surfaced to consciousness. Allow me to share with you three of the statements that formed part of the disconnected train of thought evoked by today's session:

1. My five-year-old has been biting his fingernails lately.
2. About forty million Americans (20 percent of the population) change their addresses at least once a year and in many cities more than 35 percent of the population moves yearly.
3. I found voting in the recent election to be a depressing experience.

What ties the statements is the fact that most individuals in this society have lost whatever sense of community they once may have had and whatever control they once may have exercised over their lives and their government.

Because my family lives in a university town and because academics are notable nomads, five-year-old Kevin has lost within the past eighteen months a number of nursery-school chums: Benjy recently moved to Israel, Leo to London, and Jana to Rouen for parents' sabbatical stays; Robert returned to Birmingham, England; Derrick has moved to Boston; and Jimmy has moved to New Jersey. The consequence is that Kevin talks a good deal about how he misses his former friends, speculates about what they are now doing, wonders if he will ever see them again, repeatedly asks why they had to move, and bites his nails. He suffers from an aspect of future shock — transience — and my wife and I wonder how long he will willingly invest his emotions in close friendships if such friendships cannot endure.

When a society is constantly on the move, representative government becomes almost meaningless. We do not know those who purport to represent us, except through managed images projected across media, nor do they know us except through shallow opinion polls that help them chart campaigns harmonious with political winds. In place of legislators who rode circuit and sat on cracker barrels to discover and at times influence the will of their constituency, we have huge campaign slush funds which purchase votes indirectly and patronage less subtly, staged rallies, and irresponsible rhetoric penned by p. r. men. The consequence of being consistently lied to by politicians and other hucksters of manufactured wares, both human and nonhuman, is that one eventually loses faith not only in government but in other institutions as well. A Harris poll cited in *Social Education* (March 1972) tested an adult cross section on how much faith Americans have in their social and political institutions. Answers were compared with an identical poll conducted five years earlier:

— In 1967, 55 percent expressed faith in the leadership of the major business corporations; today only 27 percent do.
— 67 percent then had faith in banks and financial institutions; today 37 percent do.
— 62 percent had faith in the military; now only 27 percent do.
— 41 percent had faith in Congress in 1967, low enough then but now down to 19 percent. During the same time faith in the executive branch went from 41 to 23 percent.
— 56 percent had great faith in the scientific community five years ago; today the figure is 32 percent.

One can only conclude that there now exists a national crisis in leadership.

Foreshadowing the findings of the Harris poll were the findings of a study conducted in spring 1971 by Daniel Yankelovich, Inc., for the John D. Rockefeller, III Fund. When a total of 1244 students were interviewed on fifty campuses, 30 percent reported they would rather live in some other country than the United States. Authors of the report say that the desire to leave this country — preferably for Australia, Canada, or Western Europe — indicates an increasing belief among students that American society is "a sick society."

Citizens who lose faith in the major institutions of the society, who consistently find themselves unable to redress what they consider to be wrongs perpetrated by those institutions, feel that they are being denied some important dimension of selfhood — the exercise of legitimate power. In reviewing Rollo May's latest work, *Power and Innocence,* Anatole Broyard writes in the New York *Times* (November 2, 1972):

> When [May] says, "powerlessness corrupts," I want to shout, "That's right!" ... We have not yet learned that it is not power but its opposite — impotence — that leads to violence. ...
>
> When a society is in profound transition like ours, language is the first thing to disintegrate. And when language is corrupted, people lose faith in what they hear and begin to hit one another. Dr. May puts it very succinctly: "Violence and communication are mutually exclusive."

I have neither time nor inclination this morning to document in great detail the growth of violence in the United States. FBI statistics show that the annual incidence of violent crime rose during the 1960s from 160 to 393 per 100,000 inhabitants: murder increased 70 percent, rape 113 percent, and robbery 212 percent. Despite campaign oratory which promised that streets would be free, major crime increased 30 percent during the first three and one-half years of the Nixon administration. Feelings of powerlessness in the making of significant life choices may also be responsible for such self-inflicted violence as drug addiction, including alcoholism, and suicide — rates of which have been rising rapidly, particularly among youth.

But what has all this to do with the future of education and the future of English teaching? Much, I believe, though I am not sure I can make the case quickly, except through the oversimplification that follows.

Since formal education exists as an institution within the society, it is affected by the pervasive concerns, the tone, the ambience

of the society. Vietnam, ecology, population, drugs, poverty, crime, racism, integration — all help establish the climate for education. Further, because it must rely for funds upon the goodwill of political leaders and those who control media (many a tax election for the schools has been lost because the local newspaper failed to support it), education, perforce, reflects the values mainly of the powerful. And like other institutions within the society, it is no longer widely trusted by those not in power — principally students, the elderly, members of ethnic and racial minorities, and in some instances, teachers. (How many classroom teachers, for example, have championed the rage for behavioral objectives or the rhetoric of accountability?)

Because the fundamental purpose of language is to facilitate communication among human beings, its purposeful misuse in order to prevent open communication subverts the processes of a democratic society and demeans our ends as teachers of English.

In a number of publications, Willis Harman, director of the Educational Policy Research Center at Stanford Research Institute, has examined at length what various changes in society imply for the future of schools. Harman sees ahead the possibility of either a second-phase industrial society or a person-centered society. If the former is dominant, we can anticipate emphasis upon a high order of planning in the society; strong control of dissident citizens; decentralization of schooling and use of a combined system of machines and human assistants located in homes, neighborhood centers, museums, and industrial and business locations; a continuation of the arms race; and subordination of the individual to always expanding economic goals. At its worst, such a society could be a kind of garrison state. If, on the other hand, we achieve a person-centered society, the industrial system and economic growth will become subservient to human needs, including, according to Harman, "the cultivation and enrichment of all human beings, in all their diversity, complexity, and profundity." In such a society, distinctions between formal and informal education will have been effaced, and education will be largely a lifetime activity with emphasis on problem solving, decision making, self-learning habits and skills, and self-understanding. Escalation of the arms race will have ceased and justice will be available to all citizens, regardless of race or economic condition.

Despite the spate of recent works that have discussed the potentiality in one form or another of a person-centered society — Reich's *The Greening of America,* Roszak's *Where the Wasteland Ends,* Leonard's *The Transformation* — I fear that we are headed

away from such a society. Mr. Nadar and his raiders have charged in *Who Runs Congress? The President, Big Business or You?* that it is big business and the White House which determine Congressional decisions and the direction of the nation. Certainly the direction the present administration has taken to date seems clear: it has chosen to inhibit citizens' access to information and to discourage free communication within the society. It has argued that the use of wire taps, without court orders, is only an extension of the president's "inherent" powers; it has supported "no-knock" laws which would allow the police the right to enter homes secretly or by force; it has advocated preventive detention without bail of persons on the mere suspicion they might commit crimes; it has incarcerated political dissenters on charges of conspiracies which subsequently proved unfounded; it has used, in the case of the Pentagon Papers, prior restraint against the press for the first time in the nation's history; it was instrumental in having Peter Bridge, a reporter, jailed for not revealing confidential sources to a grand jury. It is an administration whose leader avoids news conferences, relies for advice upon confidants largely unknown to the public — Dwight Chapin, H. R. Haldeman, John D. Ehrlichman — and conducts diplomacy through Henry Kissinger and General Alexander Haig, Jr., rather than through the secretary of state. Further, it is an administration which has increased military budgets, while vetoing education budgets as being inflationary. Despite being tainted with corruption in the cases of the milk industry, ITT, Watergate, and wheat sales to Russia, it is an administration which won the last election handily. One can only guess the reasons why only about 55 percent of the 139.6 million citizens of voting age bothered to cast ballots, the lowest proportion since 1948.

In concluding, I would like to express my belief that teachers of English have in the subject matter of language the richest resource for making possible honest communication, even within an advanced technological society. We must teach students how to analyze language critically and how to use it responsibly in all of their relationships, including relationships they need to maintain with elected representatives. If we do not, I fear for the future of this nation and of its institutions, education among them.

A Brief Introduction to the ERIC System

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The acronym ERIC/RCS stands for the Educational Resources Information Center on Reading and Communication Skills. ERIC is a national information system originally designed by the United States Office of Education and now under the sponsorship of the National Institute of Education (NIE). The Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills (located at NCTE headquarters, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, Illinois 61801) is responsible for collecting, analyzing, evaluating, and disseminating educational information and materials related to research, instruction, and personnel preparation in English, journalism, reading, speech communication, and theater.

The English/Journalism Module of ERIC/RCS is responsible for educational information related to teaching and learning the English language, to educational journalism — including the learning and teaching of journalism in print and electronic media, and to the training of teachers at all levels.

One needs a working concept of the parts of the ERIC system in order to make the best use of it. The following descriptions and definitions of ERIC terms are defined to lead the beginning user of the system to the information he needs.

THESAURUS OF ERIC DESCRIPTORS

The key to the entire system is the *Thesaurus of ERIC Descriptors*. This volume, which is continuously being updated, is the source of all subject terms (*descriptors*) used for indexing and for retrieval of documents and journals in the ERIC collection. Each document entered into the system is assigned several *descriptor* terms selected from the thesaurus that indicate the essential contents of the document. Descriptors marked by an asterisk delineate the major concepts of the document, while the unmarked (minor) descriptors denote concepts that receive only passing attention or minor emphasis in the document.

(In cases where no descriptor term adequately describes some important feature of a document, an *identifier* term may be assigned

in addition to the descriptors. Any word, name, or phrase may be an identifier. For the most part, identifiers are useful only to information specialists and not to the average user of the ERIC system.)

RESEARCH IN EDUCATION

Abstracts of documents thus indexed, using the descriptor and identifier terms, are printed in *Research in Education (RIE)*, the monthly journal published by the National Institute of Education. About 1,000 documents from all eighteen ERIC Clearinghouses are indexed and summarized in *RIE* each month. In addition to the main entry section, each volume contains indexes arranged by subject, author, and source (institution or publisher).

The subject index is arranged, alphabetically, by descriptor terms. Under each term are found, ordered numerically by ERIC document numbers, all those documents which have been assigned that particular term as a major (starred) descriptor. Thus a document which has been assigned five major descriptor terms may be found in five places in the subject index.

Most documents abstracted in *RIE* are available from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS) in two forms: microfiche (MF), a four-by-six-inch microfilm card containing up to ninety-eight pages of text; or hard copy (HC), six-by-eight-inch, black and white, photographically reproduced pages in a paper binding. A few documents listed in *RIE* are not available from EDRS. In these cases, ordering information and current price are listed with the abstract in the main entry section.

CURRENT INDEX TO JOURNALS IN EDUCATION

Articles from nearly 600 educational journals are indexed in the same manner in another ERIC publication, *Current Index to Journals in Education (CIJE)*. These articles are assigned a six-digit EJ (educational journal) accession number and are often annotated. Semiannual and annual compilations of *CIJE* are available. Copies of the journal articles indexed in *CIJE* are not available from ERIC. They must be obtained from your library collection or from the publisher.

USING THE ERIC SYSTEM

Information may be found most economically in the ERIC system when a simple step-by-step procedure is followed. First,

phrase the question you want answered as precisely as possible. Then go to the thesaurus and locate the narrowest descriptor terms that seem most closely related to the topic of interest. To assist the user, most descriptor terms are followed by a list of cross-references to other descriptors worth referring to; these are classified as narrower terms (NT), broader terms (BT), and related terms (RT).

Next, refer to the subject indexes in *RIE* and *CIJE* and read the titles listed under the descriptor terms you have chosen. Note the ED and EJ numbers of those documents that seem appropriate for your purposes and locate the document citations in the main entry sections. By reading the abstracts in *RIE* and the annotations in *CIJE*, you can decide which documents and articles you wish to read in their entirety. Microfiche copies of most documents indexed in *RIE* are filed sequentially by ED number.

For further information on how to use the ERIC system, consult the librarian in charge of your local ERIC collection. (Most collections have a variety of brochures on ERIC and how it may best be used.) If you wish, you may also write for a copy of an illustrated step-by-step introduction to the system entitled "How to Use ERIC." It is available from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402 (Stock Number 1780-0796) 35¢.

LOCATIONS OF ERIC COLLECTIONS

There are over 500 complete ERIC microfiche collections and numerous partial collections across the country. Many university libraries and educational agencies have a collection of ERIC microfiche or a list of locations of complete ERIC collections. Write to any ERIC clearinghouse for further information about the ERIC system.

FUTURE ERIC/RCS ARTICLES

Further articles by the ERIC/RCS Clearinghouse will deal with current issues in English education. By using the information contained in the present article, you will be able to locate the journal articles and documents which can contribute most to your professional development in the various areas to be discussed.

A Spelling Quiz

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English teachers, how good is your spelling? Can you select the correct spelling from each of the following sets?

caldron, cauldron
carousel, carrousel
collectible, collectable
incrust, encrust
vender, vendor
dwarfs, dwarves
buses, busses
halos, haloes
dryly, drily
kidnapped, kidnaped
pixy, pixie
mama, mamma
gismo, gizmo
nicotine, nicotin
smoky, smokey
moveable, movable

You should have a perfect score because all spellings given are correct; they all occur in one or more of the leading desk dictionaries.[1] Two recent books, Lee Deighton's *A Comparative Study of Spellings in Four Major Collegiate Desk Dictionaries* and Donald Emery's *Variant Spellings in Modern American Dictionaries*[2] each list about 2,000 relatively common words which have more than one correct spelling given in leading dictionaries.

Unfortunately some words have as many as five, seven, or even nine spellings given in the best-selling desk dictionaries:

shivaree, charivari, charivaree, chivaree, chivari
caliph, calif, khalif, kalif, kaliph, khalifa
parakeet, parrakeet, parroquet, paroquet, parroket, paraquet

[1] *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language, The Random House College Dictionary,* and *Standard College Dictionary.*

[2] Lee C. Deighton. *A Comparative Study of Spellings in Four Major Collegiate Dictionaries* (Pleasantville, N.Y.: Hardscrabble Press, 1972). Donald Emery, *Variant Spellings in Modern American Dictionaries.* Rev. ed. (Urbana, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1973).

finicky, finical, finnicky, finicking, finikin, finiking, finickin, finicking
jinni, jinn, genie, djinni, djinn, jinnee, djinn, jinnee, djin, jin, djinny
kinnikinnick, kinnikinic, kinnikinick, kinnikinnic, killikinnic,
killickinnic, killikinic, killickinnick.

Even more confusing for the English teacher is the disagreement among leading dictionaries over preferred spelling. Emery found thirty-two words for which one spelling was given as preferred in three dictionaries, but another spelling first in the other two dictionaries. The following are a few examples:

all-around (adj.), all-round
caldron, cauldron
dumfound, dumbfound
fjord, fiord
spumone, spumoni
veld, veldt

In each case, the spelling given preference most often is listed first.

A genuine problem for the English teacher is a fairly large group of words which have an alternate spelling given in only one dictionary. Can an English teacher mark a word misspelled if the spelling occurs in one widely used dictionary? Some spellings that occur in only one dictionary are the following: *accidently, albicore, bobbie pin, boney, brocoli, bullrush, sesspool, coocoo, enzym,* and *expresso.*

An even more confusing situation for the English teacher is that spellings which are preferred in some dictionaries do not occur in others. *Disk jockey* is the first spelling in the *Random House* and *Standard College* dictionaries, but does not appear in *Webster's Eighth New Collegiate. Enology* is the first spelling in two dictionaries and the alternate spelling in two others, but does not occur in the *Standard College Dictionary.* In like manner, *orangutan* is the preferred spelling in the *Eighth Collegiate* and the *New World* and a variant spelling in the *American Heritage* and the *Random House* but cannot be found in the *Standard College Dictionary.*

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